

## Creating Your Online Forum

### 1. Obtain Web-Space

In order to host your forum online, you will need web-space. Web-space is simply an online storage medium that allows you to put images, text, and an entire website online for the world to see. If you've ever worked with free websites like Geocities or Angelfire, or even some teacher notes pages, it's a similar concept.

There are two main options when seeking web-space, those being **Free Web Hosting** and, logically enough, **Paid Web Hosting**. One option in addition to Paid Web Hosting, and often something that is part of the package, is your own **domain**.

#### Free Web Hosting:

Finding free web-space can sometimes be difficult. Many services offer free hosting, but put mandatory ads on your page, which can be unattractive and cumbersome. Most free web-hosting services do not offer the capability to host forums like the one described herein. The best characteristic of free hosting is simply that: that it is free. If you decide to go with free web hosting, the following are absolutely necessary:

1. **FTP (File-Transfer Protocol) Capabilities**
2. **Permission to upload and use PHP driven message boards/forums.**
3. **Ability to use PHP (Hypertext Pre-Processor)** (This is a very rare characteristic in free hosting, but it is absolutely necessary in order to be able to run the forum.) (PHP is a programming language, but don't worry! You won't need to know how to program PHP because the forum is all pre-programmed for you.)
4. **At least 50 MB (Megabytes) storage space.** (Storage space is the amount of space that images, text, or anything else may take up on the server. That is the equivalent function of a hard-drive on a normal computer)
5. **At least 1 GB (Gigabyte) bandwidth per month** (Bandwidth is the amount of data that is allowed to be transferred. For example, when someone visits a site and they see (download) a 15 kilobyte picture, that takes 15 kilobytes out of your monthly bandwidth. Once your maximum bandwidth has been exceeded, no one is able to see your site.) (1000 Bytes (B)= 1 Kilobyte (KB); 1000 Kilobytes (KB) = 1 Megabyte (MB); 1000 Megabytes (MB) = 1 Gigabyte (GB))

**All of these specifications can generally be found when you are signing up for web-hosting. If you have any questions, you can usually e-mail the webmaster.**

It is generally very difficult to find a web-hosting service that offers those characteristics for free, but feel free to shop around and research.

### **Paid Web Hosting:**

Although it costs a monthly, or sometimes yearly fee to use paid web-hosting, it can be worth it if you don't want to have to invest the time and effort to use free-hosting, and you don't want to face the hassle of working with ads and other surprises that may crop up. The options are far vaster when looking at paid hosting. Prices also can be just as vast, but they can also vary greatly, so once again, research is key. The following guidelines should assist in finding a well-priced web host.

- When looking at Paid Web Hosting, look for a relatively low price; **\$10/month for a functional service is reasonable.**
- You can find very good services for much lower prices, but you can also find mediocre services for higher prices, so research carefully.
- Look to the specifications given earlier in the free section about what the service must provide. You may even find pay-services that do not offer all of those options. Generally the lowest price will suffice for your needs. The storage space and bandwidth numbers are fudgable; just make sure you stay within that general range
- Going with big-name hosts usually is more expensive for less service, but you are guaranteed more stability and "up-time," (Servers can "go down," which means that any of the sites hosted on them will be inaccessible while the server is down. Bigger hosts have more servers, so down-time is rarer amongst them.) but you can get a better deal by going through some of the smaller hosts.

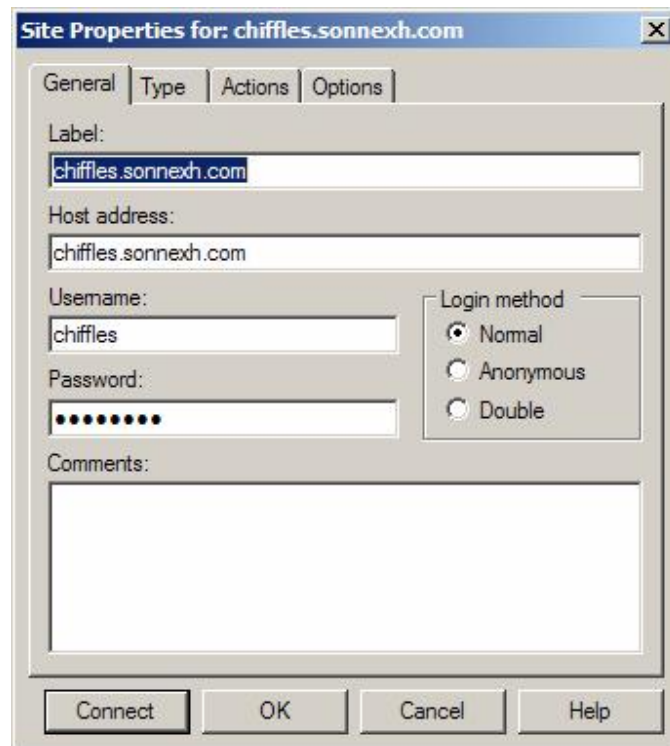
This is all a matter of personal preference.

One other option that will be available with some hosts is that of your own domain. If you don't have your own domain, and you went through Geocities, for example, your site would be found by going to <http://www.geocities.com/ex42/u-high-apush/> or something along those general lines. If you paid for your own domain, however, you could make it <http://www.u-high-apush.com> or <http://www.mrsmithsclass.org> – any name you want as long as it's available and no one else has taken it. Prices for domains vary through the services that provide them, but generally they are not too much money. Some services include a domain as part of the plan; others don't, but they are not necessary—only convenient—either way.

Once you have your web-space, you are ready to start working with it.

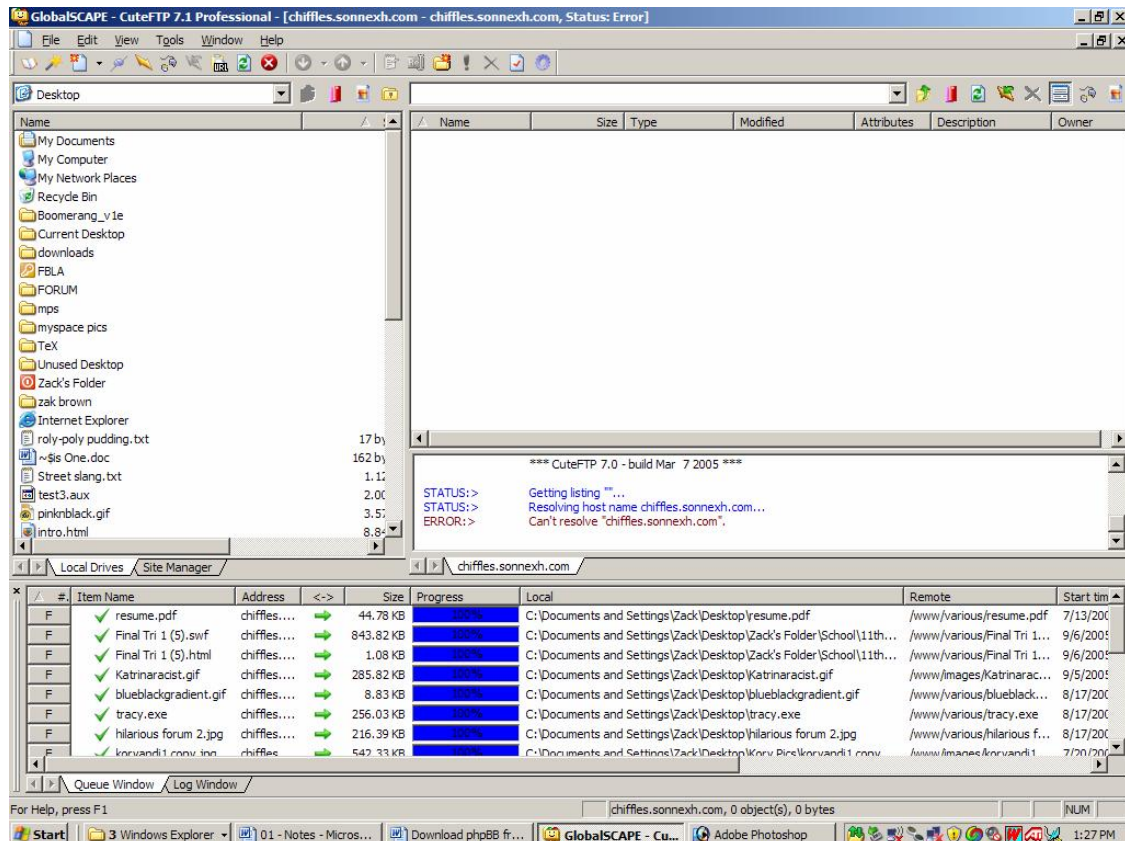
- Download phpBB from <http://www.phpBB.com/downloads.php> . If given a choice where to download the file to, choose "desktop."
  - phpBB is the name of the software that runs the forum; it is essentially the forum itself. Just like you can install software on your own computer, you can install phpBB onto the web server.

- Extract all the files on your computer by right clicking on the file and choosing “Extract All.” Continue through the dialog box until you can click “Finish.” Once you’ve done that, you may work with your extracted files.
- Obtain an FTP (File Transfer Protocol) client. File Transfer Protocol is how you move files from your computer to the web server, or essentially how you move your files online. You can use various FTP clients, such as CuteFTP (Which you can get a free trial for online at [www.globalscape.com](http://www.globalscape.com)) but anything with a user-friendly-enough interface will do the trick.
  - In the FTP client, there will be settings to define your server and to where the files will be transferred. Generally, this will be “yoursite.com” (without the “www”,) (substituting your own website for “yoursite”) and then your password will be whatever is defined by your web host. Check with your webmaster if you are unsure.



In this example, the site is <http://chiffles.sonnexh.com>, the username is “chiffles,” and the password is 8 characters long. This is using CuteFTP, and you get to it by going to File > New Site... and then you can fill in those blanks. Once again, if you have any questions about your username and password, check with your webmaster.

- When using a client, it is usually a pretty simple click-and-drag system. Click and drag the files from one window with your files on your computer to the other window with the files on the server.



In this example. You can click and drag the files from the left window (your computer) to the right window (the website) after you've connected.

- Transfer the unzipped files to the website by opening your FTP client and moving the entire phpBB folder onto your website, naming it whatever you would like. If you move it into the “root,” or base of your site.
  - If, for example, you moved the contents of the folder into a folder on the server named “schoolforum” on the site <http://www.evergreenhigh.com/>, you would be able to get to the forum by going to <http://www.evergreenhigh.com/schoolforum/phpbb>. Add the name of the phpBB folder on the name of the path, or you can rename phpbb to whatever you want. You can rename the “phpbb” folder to “schoolforum” before you upload it, (upload means “move it to the server”) then put it onto your root folder (the very first level of the site).
- Once you have done this, you will have to check with your webmaster for the “**database name**” and the “**database server**”.
- At this point, direct your browser to <http://www.yoursite.com/phpBB> (replace the site with the correct site name, and replace “phpBB” with whatever you named the folder, or if you stacked it inside another folder, put the entire path).

- There will be various information to fill out at this site once you go there.
- Please fill the “database name” and “database server” fields *exactly* as the webmaster tells you. It is vital that they are correct.
- All the rest of the information is personal to your forum, so fill it out as you wish. Once you have completed all of it, press “submit”
  - If there “is an error writing to config.php,” choose to “FTP it to the correct location”
  - If the problem persists or you have more problems, please contact your service provider before continuing.
- You should now have a functional forum!
- Another very useful source for information is <http://www.phpbb.com>, where you can go to the tutorials and most of your questions can be answered in a pretty easily-read format.